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IMPORTANCE OF A MINISTER'S REPUTATION.

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SERMON

DELIVERED AT THE INSTALLATION OF THE

REV. NATHANIEL HEWIT, D.D.

AS PASTOR OF THE SECOND CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF CHRIST

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SERMON.

ECCL. 7: 1.

A GOOD NAME IS BETTER THAN PRECIOUS OINTMENT.

THIS maxim is founded in the nature of the human mind. Desire for the esteem and affection of others is inseparable from our intellectual and moral constitution. It is one of the affections which uniformly manifests itself in early life; and it may be expected ordinarily to increase in strength, in proportion to the intimacy of the relation which individuals sustain to society, and in some proportion also to the degree in which their minds are cultivated and improved. It is obvious that those who are conscious of a special dependence on the good opinion of others for the accomplishment of their desires respecting their own welfare, or the welfare of their fellow men, must value reputation more than those, who are not conscious of such dependence. And it would seem that those, whose intellectual and moral powers and whose susceptibilities for pleasure and pain are heightened and refined by cultivation, must be peculiarly alive to the approbation and esteem of their fellow men. It is accordingly found, that professional men, being closely connected with society, and having their sensibilities strengthened by education, generally feel an unusual interest in whatever concerns their good name. And no one can doubt that this unusual interest is altogether natural and just.

But on the present occasion, I shall confine my remarks to the value of a good name in respect to one class of professional men. I shall endeavour to show how peculiarly dear a spotless

reputation must be to *ministers of the gospel*, and how peculiarly important it must be in relation to the sacred work which they have undertaken.

The good name of a Christian minister, of which I shall here speak, does not consist so much in his being reputed a good neighbour, citizen, or scholar, as in the esteem in which he is held by others, *as a good minister of the gospel*,—in his reputation for intelligence, piety, faithfulness, and all those other qualities, for which a man invested with the sacred office should be distinguished.

The value of reputation to a gospel minister may be considered, first, as relating to *his own private enjoyment*. Having, like all others, a natural desire for the esteem of his fellow-men, he must be gratified, when that esteem is manifested. And in consequence of his having more refined sensibilities, and a more intimate and extensive connexion with others, than men commonly have, he comes, as has already been suggested, to possess in a more than usual degree, an aptness to be affected with whatever concerns his reputation ; so that the enjoyment of a good name affords him exquisite pleasure, and the loss of it occasions exquisite pain. To a minister, whose social and moral character has been duly cultivated, the possession of an unspotted reputation is one of the most precious earthly comforts. It animates him in his duties, and helps to render his severest labors pleasant. It is a refreshment to him when weary and exhausted, and a precious solace in seasons of affliction. There is no blessing of an earthly kind, which can afford him so much pleasure, as a *blameless character*. On the other hand, what calamity is there which wounds him so deeply, and in so many ways, as the injury of his reputation ?

But if we would understand the chief value of a minister's reputation, we must consider it as *the means of promoting his usefulness*. In every part of his office, the benefit resulting from his labors will be very much in proportion to the character he sustains in the view of the community. That this must be the case is evident from the fact, that the usefulness of a minister's labors consists in the effect he produces on the minds of those to whom he

ministers, and that this effect is inseparably connected with their views of his character. We may say as much as we please as to what would be desirable and proper ; but that which I have stated is a fact ; and it will be a fact, while human nature remains as it is.

For the correctness of the representation which I have made, I appeal to the experience of those whom I now address. When you have heard a minister of blameless reputation and eminent piety preach the truths of religion ; has not your reverence for the man, and your confidence in his goodness given new force to his instructions ? Has not the excellent character of the preacher been associated in your minds with the truths he has inculcated ? and has it not in this way been the means of impressing those truths more deeply and permanently on your hearts, and of investing them with greater power over your actions ? But if you have ever been so unhappy as to attend on the preaching of a minister whose reputation in your view was not good,—especially one whose faults were palpable and glaring ; has not this circumstance detracted greatly from the benefit which might otherwise have been derived from his labors ? How weighty soever the doctrines he has set forth, and how serious and eloquent soever the manner of his preaching ; has not the remembrance of the improprieties of his conduct gone far towards preventing the good effect of what you have heard from his lips ?

And is not the same true in regard to every other part of ministerial labor ? A minister of Christ comes to you in time of deep affliction, and with the looks and the language of sympathy and devotion, attempts to minister to your comfort. Is not the effect produced upon your heart derived in a great measure from your views of his character ? If you regard him as a man of God, and have confidence in his goodness ; his conversation and prayers take strong hold on your feelings. Every thing he says comes to your mind in close alliance with the excellence of his character. The very sight of him when he enters your house, and the thought of him, when absent, infuses a kind of sacredness into the sensations of your heart. But have you ever been thus profited by the visits of a minister, for whose character you have

had no cordial esteem? In such a case, has not your mind been, in a great measure, barred against any good influence from his conversation, and even from his prayers? Have you not been conscious of a kind of involuntary resistance in your feelings against the most important sentiments, when introduced by one, of whom you entertained so low an opinion?

You are sometimes desirous of conversing freely with your minister respecting your spiritual and eternal interests. Various doubts and difficulties arise in your mind, which you wish him to solve. You have a severe struggle with some wrong propensity, in regard to which you need his assistance. If you esteem and love him, as a faithful minister of Christ; you can, without reserve, disclose to him your inward struggles and difficulties, and in many ways derive substantial benefit from his counsels and prayers. But if you doubt the sincerity of his heart; if you suspect that he himself has corrupt propensities which he has not subdued, and sins of which he has not repented, and that he is not acquainted by experience with the conflicts and enjoyments of the Christian life; your intercourse with him will fail of securing to you any important benefits.

A good name is of great value to a minister, as it gives a salutary influence to his *example*. If his reputation is unblemished; his daily conduct,—the whole course of his life will have a happy effect upon the minds of his people, and will powerfully attract them to copy his excellencies. But only let them observe or hear any thing which mars his ministerial character, and they will quickly regard with suspicion his most virtuous actions, and his most amiable dispositions, and so even that part of his example which is right, will lose its salutary influence.

There is another point of light, in which we are to contemplate the value of a minister's reputation, particularly at the present day. The Christian world is full of benevolent enterprises. In most of these, ministers of the Gospel must have a principal agency. Their education, their office, and their influence in society qualify them to be specially useful in forwarding all the great objects of Christian benevolence. But there is no way, in which they can contribute more effectually or more permanently

to the promotion of these objects, than by the influence of a *good name*. To be espoused and advocated by one who is esteemed a wise and good man, is an advantage to any cause. The mere knowledge of this fact will make new friends to the cause, and increase the attachment and zeal of those who were friends before. If a minister has a blameless and respectable character; every argument he uses and every effort he makes in behalf of a good cause, turns to account. On the contrary, it cannot but prove a disadvantage to any cause, however excellent in itself, that a man of bad character is its advocate. All his efforts to promote it are either paralyzed, or rendered hurtful, by the knowledge of his misconduct. In this way Christianity itself has suffered many an injury, which human power can never repair.

Thus we have considered the value of a good name to a minister of the Gospel, in reference to his own enjoyment, and in reference to the various ways in which he may be useful to his fellow men.

After this brief illustration of the subject, it will be easy to determine, in *what light we are to regard those, who designedly do any thing to injure the reputation of a Christian minister*. Such an injury may be committed by any of the forms of *evil speaking, detraction, and slander*. It may be committed by speaking ill of a minister and reproaching him, without a just warrant, and without an obvious and necessary cause. Some defects of character belong to every Christian and to every minister on earth. The precepts of our religion require us to treat these common defects with forbearance and candor, and as far as may be, to conceal them. If then we are forward to punish a minister's faults; if we make them the subject of free remark even in private conversation, except when the glory of God and the welfare of men manifestly require it; we are chargeable with the sin of injuring his reputation.* We are still more culpable, if we bring accusations against him without clear and sufficient evidence; or if we exaggerate his faults, giving them a higher coloring than they de-

* See the sermons of Barrow and Tillotson on evil speaking; also the sermon of Dr. Dwight on slander: sermon 125 in his Theology.

serve, or representing them as worse than they would actually appear, if all the circumstances were well understood.

Slander consists, generally, in uttering any kind of falsehood against another with a view to injure his interest, or his credit. Men are guilty of this crime towards a gospel minister, when they bear false witness against him, or charge him with wrong principles and wrong actions which do not belong to him. So David complained, that his enemies laid to his charge things which he was not conscious of. We slander a minister, when we ascribe those actions of his, which have the appearance of being right, to wrong principles. All his words and actions, especially considering the difficulties of his station, ought to have the most favorable construction they will bear. When we give them the most unfavorable construction,—what is it but a kind of slander?—We lie under this guilt, when we give a partial representation of a minister's words or actions, concealing some circumstances, and so making a different impression from what would be made, if the whole were known; or when, by our suggestions, or by our looks, or by an artful silence, we infuse unfavorable thoughts or suspicions respecting him into the minds of others. We are guilty of slandering a minister, if we either invent or needlessly circulate ill reports about him; or if we easily take up a reproach against him, and go up and down as tale-bearers, uttering things disgraceful to his character.

These are the principal ways, in which men may injure the reputation of a gospel minister. Now in what light must we regard those who are chargeable with this conduct? In what light are they represented by *the Word of God*? Here,—where things are always represented as they are,—we find that the conduct referred to, is condemned as a direct violation of the moral law, written by the finger of God on tables of stone: *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour*. It is also a violation of that comprehensive precept, so often repeated in the New Testament: *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. Who would slander himself? Who would attempt to injure his *own* reputation? Who would publish his own failings for the purpose of disgracing himself?

To injure a minister's good name is to violate that Christian rule, which is approved by every man's conscience, and which has been pronounced by all the world to be preeminently excellent : *Whatsoever ye would that others should do unto you, do ye also the same unto them.* Now would any one of you regard it as a desirable thing, that others should indulge prejudices and evil surmises against you, and that, by venting them in any of the forms of evil speaking, they should endeavour to lower you in the public estimation? Would you wish to have *your* character aspersed? But if you would not be willing that others should do this to you, how can you do it to them, without transgressing this holy precept?

The Scriptures make freedom from the guilt of backbiting and slander to be essential to the character of God's people. The Psalmist inquires of God ; *Who shall abide in thy tabernacle ? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill ?* An important part of the reply is ; *He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.* So likewise an apostle says ; *If any man among you seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, that man's religion is vain.* And another says ; *Speak evil of no man.* And if you wish to know how our blessed Saviour regards evil speaking, listen to the words which he uttered : " Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, *false witness, evil speakings.*" He put *evil speaking* in company with the blackest crimes. So also Paul, in the same manner with his divine Master, puts *whisperers* and *backbiters* by the side of *fornicators*, and *murderers*, and *haters of God*. And when he enumerated the odious characters that should appear in the last times, he gave *evil speakers* a prominent place. " Men shall be lovers of themselves, covetous,—*evil speakers*, without natural affection,—*false accusers.*" Such, according to the decision of God's holy Word, is the guilt of whispering, backbiting, and evil speaking. But this crime, always so detestable in the sight of God, is attended with peculiar aggravations, when committed against one who sustains the sacred office of ambassador of Christ, and is entrusted, in so important a sense, with the interests of the church.

Do any of my hearers wonder. that the inspired writers so

emphatically forbid and reprobate evil speaking, and represent it as so heinous an offence? You will cease to wonder, if you consider *from what sources it springs, and what evils follow in its train.*

First, its sources.

Evil speaking in its various forms, being from its very nature designed to injure others, must proceed from a *malevolent disposition*. It can spring from no other source. Can love to your brother lead you to speak evil of him, to take up a reproach against him, or to do any thing to hurt his reputation? If you speak evil of another, it is because you do not love him; it is because you are actuated by *envy, ill will, hatred*. And if any of you should endeavour, by slanderous representations, to injure the character of a minister of Christ, you would betray not only hatred to him, but disregard of the Master whom he serves, and of the cause which he is laboring to promote. The character of a minister is intimately connected with the honor of Christ, and the success of the gospel. If you injure the first, you injure both the others. And what disposition can be more criminal, than disaffection, or even indifference, to the honor of Christ, and the success of his gospel?

The experience of ages confirms the truth of this representation. For there never was a man, who was alive to the glory of the Saviour, and who cordially desired the success of his Gospel, who did not at the same time feel a tender regard for the reputation of his ministers.

See then the nature of the principle, which leads men to asperse the character of those who bear the sacred office. The heart of man, depraved as it is, is hardly capable of a disposition more contrary to goodness, or more hateful to God, than that which is exhibited by slanderers; especially those who slander the ministers of Christ.

That the conduct of those, who thus injure the reputation of a minister, deserves to be reprobated, will be still more manifest, if you consider the *consequences* which naturally flow from it.

In the first place, they who slander a Christian minister, strike a heavy blow at his *private happiness*. They rob him of that

which is of more value to him than any other earthly good. The injury they commit extends also to his dearest relatives and friends, and proves inexpressibly distressing to their hearts.

If men succeed in their attempts to injure the good name of a minister, they will, in the same degree, injure his *usefulness*. The injury will affect every benevolent object which he aims to promote. It will be a sensible injury to the welfare of *his church*. Every follower of Christ who sits under his ministry, will suffer loss. It will be an injury to the immortal interests of all with whom he has any connexion. The injury will spread as far as his influence extends ; because his influence will be less salutary in proportion as he enjoys less of the esteem and confidence of his fellow-men.

When you thus take into consideration the disposition which prompts men to injure a minister's reputation, and the pernicious consequences which are likely to result from such conduct, you will cease to wonder, that it is so emphatically prohibited and so severely condemned by the word of God. Your wonder will rather be, that so odious and hurtful a vice should be thought of so lightly, as it generally is ; and above all, that it should prevail to so fearful an extent among those who profess to be Christians.

Now whoever allows himself, either publicly or privately, to utter slanders against the ministers of Christ, and supposes that this practice may be justified or excused,—with him I would seriously expostulate.

Let me then entreat you, my friend, to ponder well the subject which I have introduced on the present occasion. Turn your thoughts upon the nature and consequences of the conduct above described. Consider, that a minister's character is his dearest earthly treasure ; and remember that you owe it a just respect.—Rob him of his property,—break in upon him in the slumbers of the night, and inflict fatal wounds upon his body, rather than rob him of his good name, or wound his character. Suppress, then, those slanderous words you are about to speak. Suppress those evil surmises you are about to utter, and those dishonorable reports you are about to spread. Though sport to you, they may be arrows and death to him.

The injury you are about to commit against the character of a minister, may also involve his domestic circle, now cheerful and happy, in sufferings not to be described.

But I wish you more particularly to consider, how far your evil surmises and slanders may go towards injuring a minister's *usefulness*. By aspersing his character, and destroying the confidence which the public repose in his integrity, you will do much towards rendering his benevolent efforts abortive, and his talents and acquisitions worthless. In this way you will exert your power to hinder the influence of the Christian religion, and to put a stop to the conversion of sinners, the sanctification of believers, and the spread of the Gospel among those who are perishing.

To those who speak lightly of the character of Gospel ministers, I must say, a heavy charge lies against you in the book of God's remembrance. You are guilty of violating God's holy law. You are guilty of doing a great injury to a fellow being, and to one who occupies a sacred place, and is employed in a sacred and benevolent work, and to whom a good name is preeminently important. You are guilty of committing this injury against a man, who in all probability never injured you, but has cordially wished for your highest interest. And are you sure that you are not guilty of falsehood? I will venture to say, that at least a great part of your evil surmises, and of the unfavorable reports you circulate respecting gospel ministers, are utterly groundless; and that you yourself would find them so, if you should ever take pains to examine them. Have you not good reason then to fear, lest you should subject yourself to the condemnation of those who retail falsehood and calumny?

And is not such conduct stamped with cowardice and baseness? If you reproach and insult a minister to his face, you may indeed be guilty of impudence and rudeness. Still your conduct may have some appearance of courage and manhood. But to say things against him behind his back, when he can have no opportunity to defend himself; to avoid fair and open combat, and to attack him in the dark,—what is this but a compound of cruelty and meanness? What but the lurking warfare of the savage, or the midnight assassin?

Such, and more than I can now set forth, is the guilt of designedly injuring the good name of a gospel minister. Such, I must say, is the guilt of injuring the good name of *any* one who bears the sacred office. Some ministers of the present day reject the doctrines which were held sacred by the Reformers, and by the Fathers of New England. But have they, on this account, forfeited their title to be spoken of with truth, and to be treated with candor and kindness? Should there be any in our religious community, who think it allowable to misrepresent the conduct, or to stigmatize the character of a minister, because he rejects those doctrines which were held by our Fathers, and which we regard as evangelical;—to such I beg leave to say: I do indeed consider a minister who rejects these doctrines, to be in a great error. But can it be proper to oppose error by slander, instead of argument; or to attempt to promote the cause of Christianity, by transgressing one of its fundamental laws? These are not the weapons of our warfare. Say,—if such is your belief,—that a minister's opinions are, in your view, erroneous, and then prove them to be so by sober argument. But what right have you to load him with reproach and calumny, or in any way to injure his character? As well may you steal his property. Do you say, his property is his own? So is his reputation. And you have no more right to deprive him of this by slander, than of that by theft.

Suppose some one should whisper, that a man's estate was procured by dishonest means, and that in justice it does not belong to him? Would this justify you in stealing it from him? If he did wrong in getting his estate, make it appear before a proper tribunal, a court of justice, and let that court of justice take away his property, and punish him for his dishonesty. But who has a right to do this in his private capacity? So, if it be a fact that a minister has an unmerited reputation, give proof of this fact to a proper tribunal, and let his reputation be taken from him by a fair trial, in open day, and not by stealth under the cover of darkness.

I have made these remarks in regard to any minister. But they must have a special emphasis in relation to one, who cor-

dially embraces the doctrines of the gospel, who is earnestly engaged in his work, and who discharges the duties of his sacred calling with fidelity. To slander him who diligently watches for souls,—to injure the reputation of him who is truly a spiritual guide, and who desires nothing so much as the salvation of sinners, betrays a perverseness of disposition which I shall not attempt to portray.

Possibly some one may say within himself, that he cannot submit to such restraints of his natural liberty ; that his tongue is his own, and that he shall use it as he pleases.—But I must tell you, my friend, that your tongue is no more your own, than your hands are ; and that you have no more right to use the former as you please, than the latter. You may as well smite and wound a gospel minister with your hands, as with your tongue. But what right have you to pursue any course of conduct contrary to the commands of the God who made you ? He asserts an absolute authority over all the faculties of your mind, and all the members of your body, and *especially over your tongue*. And to assert the right to speak evil of a gospel minister, and thus to injure his reputation, is to assert the right to sin against God.

But perhaps you may plead, that the particular minister of whom you are disposed to speak evil, has failings, of which you cannot, without affectation, pretend to be ignorant. And besides this, you may perhaps complain, that he has in some way given you offence.

Be it so then, that he is obviously subject to failings, and that he has committed some personal offence against you. The Lord Jesus points out the course for you to pursue in such a case, by an express precept. He commands you to go to him who has offended you, *and tell him his faults between you and him alone*. Have you complied with this just and holy command ? Have you kindly and faithfully endeavoured to convince him of his misconduct, to correct his faults, and improve his character ?

I have no disposition to deny that every minister of the gospel has failings. And, my dear friend, whom I hear complaining of the failings of a Christian minister, have *you* no failings ?

And how would you desire that your failings should be treated? Treat his in the same manner.

But do you know with what heart-felt grief he reflects upon his failings, and how often he has confessed them, and wept over them before God; how sincerely he abhors himself, and how deeply he is humbled on account of them? Have you in like manner confessed and mourned over *your* failings?

The pious minister, of whom you complain, has failings indeed. But, with all his failings, God has put him into the ministry, and called him to engage in the most sacred work on earth. And God, though infinitely holy, bears with his failings, and graciously forgives them. And will you reproach a penitent with those failings, which a holy and merciful God freely forgives? "It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?" That Christian minister is God's servant, not yours. And the God whom he serves, and to whom he is accountable, has blotted out his sins, and will never remember them against him. And who art thou, that thou shouldst try to undo what the God of Heaven has done?—that thou shouldst remember, and magnify, and blazon abroad those faults, which God Almighty chooses to pardon and forget?

I grant, once more, that the minister whom you reproach, has failings and weaknesses of character; yea, many more than you have ever noticed. But does he not possess excellencies also? Is there not reason to think, that he is a friend and follower of Jesus; that he cherishes a tender concern for the salvation of sinners, and the prosperity of the Church; and that he is willing to spend and be spent in the cause of human happiness? When he sins, does he not repent, and make confession, and repair to his heavenly advocate for pardon and cleansing? Now is it right, that you should overlook his piety to God, his benevolence to men, his penitence, his fidelity, and usefulness—can it be right that you should overlook all these good qualities, and continually dwell upon his faults, and magnify and proclaim them, as though they constituted his whole character; and that you should thus deny him what in justice and truth belongs to him?

But as to the particular faults which you impute to him,—are

you sure that they really belong to him? Is it a matter of certain knowledge with you, or is it a matter of hear-say, or suspicion? Do your accusations rest on clear evidence of his guilt—evidence at hand—evidence which you are able to produce? Or do they spring from some groundless report, or some unhallowed feeling in your own breast?

To those who are disposed to treat the reputation of a Christian minister either injuriously or lightly, I have still one word more. Remember then, that there is a God who judgeth in the earth, and that he will recompense you for the injury you are doing to the character of his servants? “With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again?” It may not be long before *your* actions and *your* motives shall be treated with the same unsparing severity which you show to others. Your character, to which you are so alive, may soon be blackened by the foulest aspersions. And if you persist in the practice of evil speaking, you will by and by be subjected to general reproach and hatred, which will be the more insupportable to you, because you will feel it to be just. You will be regarded as a common enemy. An attack will ere long be made upon you, which you will be unable to resist. Public indignation will be kindled against you; infamy and contempt will overwhelm you. This, in a greater or less degree, will be your recompense even in the present life. And remember too, that a day of final reckoning is at hand, when the Lord will judge you for all your evil surmises and hard speeches against his ministers, and in the presence of assembled worlds will say to you;—*inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my servants, ye did it unto me.*

The subject of this discourse is doubtless familiar to the ministers of Christ now present. Your own experience, my dear brethren, has often led you to consider the value of a good name, and the essential difference between regarding it, as a means of gratifying the pride of the heart, and as a means of promoting the great object of your holy calling. There is, however, one view of the subject which I would suggest, as specially deserving of your attention; I mean the regard which ministers owe to the reputation of each other. Would to God that this duty were

properly attended to, and that the language of Christian ministers respecting one another were always the language of mutual tenderness, and candor, and love. If it is so criminal for other men to slander ministers, it is still more criminal for ministers to slander one another, or in any way to detract from one another's reputation. It ought to be our invariable resolution, that no one who sustains the sacred office, shall ever have his character or usefulness injured by us. If any minister loses his good name, or his influence, let it not be by any injustice or heedlessness on our part. On the contrary, let us do all in our power, by fair and honest means, to shield the reputation and increase the usefulness of every one of our brethren ; so that the world around us may have occasion to say ; *behold, how these ministers love one another !*

But important as this duty is, there is one of still greater importance ; I mean the duty of taking care of our *own* character. Our friends may be ever so solicitous for our reputation, and ever so watchful to shield us from calumny. But what will their solicitude avail us, unless we ourselves are awake to the subject, and carefully avoid whatever would expose our character to reproach or suspicion. With an unsullied reputation, we may do much for the cause of Christ ; without it, all our labors will be of little value. Let us then guard this precious treasure with constant vigilance. It were better for us to bring upon ourselves sickness, or poverty, or any other earthly calamity, than to do any thing which would in the least injure our good name.

I apprehend, brethren, that we are generally too inattentive to the importance of this subject. The word of God makes it essential to every one who bears the ministerial office, that he should be of *good report*. We cannot trifle with our reputation, we cannot neglect to guard it from injury, without neglecting a most sacred duty. For in truth, our reputation is not our own. We owe it, and all the power which it gives us to do good, to our blessed Redeemer ; and we should faithfully use it, as we should every other talent entrusted to us, for the promotion of his cause. Let us then, for the sake of our usefulness, and for the credit of our holy calling, be solicitous, by all proper means, to

preserve and increase our reputation. For this purpose, let us be good men, and good ministers of Christ ; full of faith and good works. Let us cultivate piety to God, and benevolence to man. In the exercise of Christian discretion, let us scrupulously avoid not only what is positively sinful, but what is of a doubtful character. In so doing, brethren, you may quietly trust your character with God, who will hide you in the secret of his pavilion from the strife of tongues. If at any time you are assaulted with calumny ; steadily pursue your great work ; be faithful to God ; and cast the care of your good name upon him. Guard your heart against every emotion of resentment or ill will against those who speak evil of you. Never return railing for railing, or evil-speaking for evil-speaking, but contrarywise blessing. Think less of what you suffer, than of those imperfections which render the suffering necessary. Look unto Jesus, who endured the contradiction of sinners, and copy his meekness and love and forgiveness.

If amid the agitations of this changing world, your reputation is sometimes obscured by a few dark clouds ; those clouds will quickly pass away. Even in this life, the righteous providence of God will generally bring to light the integrity of his ministers. And the all-revealing day is at hand, when the voice you will hear, will not be the voice of reproach from your enemies, nor of complaint from misjudging friends ; but the voice of your merciful Saviour and Judge, who, in the presence of the assembled universe, will say ; *Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord.* And there, in that holy, happy kingdom, of which no minister of Christ can ever feel himself worthy, you may hope to forget all the reproaches and sufferings of your earthly state, and to be crowned with glory, honor, and immortality.

Address to the Pastor elect.

MY DEARLY BELOVED BROTHER ;

The circumstances of the present occasion are peculiarly interesting to my feelings ; and I am sure they must be so to yours. It is now three years since it became my duty, as a committee of the American Temperance Society, to announce to you your appointment as general Agent of that Society, and to endeavour, by various considerations, to persuade you to accept the appointment, and to undertake the arduous work of pleading the cause of Temperance before the American public. That you might be at liberty to do this, it was found necessary that you should resign the charge of a very beloved church and society. God knows,—and *we* know in some measure,—what a sacrifice you made, when, from a regard to the good of the community, you gave up the pastoral care of your flock. And it affords me pleasure on this occasion to recall to mind the disinterested attachment to the public welfare, which your people evinced, when they consented to part with a minister, who had so successfully labored for their good, and who, in so high a degree, enjoyed their love and confidence.—During these three years, it has been my happiness, so far as my other duties would permit, to be associated with you in consultation, in prayer, and in effort, for the suppression of a far-spread and destructive vice, and the promotion of a most important public virtue. It must be regarded as a subject of special thanks to God, that in the benevolent but arduous enterprise, in which you and others have been engaged, more has been actually accomplished by the labors of three years, than we could have expected from the labors of twenty. *Be this wholly and forever to the praise of God, from whom come all good designs, and all good endeavours, and all success.* And now, my brother, let it be a comfort to your heart, that God has made you an instrument of so much good to your fellow-men, and that this good has been accomplished in so short a time, and that divine Providence so soon permits you to return to the office which you love above every other,—the *office of a Christian pastor.*

And as you have now closed the important agency which you undertook, suffer me, my brother, not only for myself, but in behalf of the American Temperance Society and its Executive Committee ; in behalf of the community at large ; and in behalf of the thousands who have been benefited by your labors, sincerely to thank you for your faithful services. These services, I well know, have cost you many a sacrifice, many a season of exhaustion, and weeping, and agony of heart. But you have not been without a reward. You have enjoyed that, which is among the best pleasures ever enjoyed on earth, the *pleasure of laboring successfully in a great and good cause*. Amid your various exposures in a most difficult, and in some respects hazardous enterprise, your life and health have been the care of a watchful Providence. And while you have been making a fearless and uncompromising attack upon the favorite indulgencies, the deep-rooted habits and prejudices of men in every rank of life, your character has been safe. And you are now receiving the most gratifying proofs of the gratitude, respect, and confidence of an enlightened public. Through the kindness of God, you are called to resume the pastoral office with most encouraging prospects of usefulness. I rejoice, my dear brother, and heartily congratulate you, that after the efforts, so wearisome to body and mind, which you have made to help forward the Temperance Reformation, you are invited to return to this beloved circle of ministers and churches ; to settle again here, in the bosom of your tried friends ; to settle here, in this united and respectable church and society ; and—what must fill your heart with the tenderest emotions,—to settle so near to your former beloved charge. The Lord command his blessing upon you, and upon your household. The Lord be continually, as he has been, your strength and your shield ; and give you the privilege, for many happy years to come, of feeding this beloved church and society with the bread of life, and of beholding in this place, and all around you, the growing prosperity of Zion. And when, according to a proposal of the American Temperance Society,* to which you and your people

* See Note at the end.

have kindly acceded, you shall, from year to year, lend a portion of your services to the cause of Temperance ; may you find that cause, so dear to your heart, in a state of higher and higher advancement, and may your labors help to secure to it still greater triumphs. Thus, dear brother, may you fill up the remnant of your days with benevolent and successful action, and, if need be, with suffering too, for Christ and his cause ; and when you shall have finished the work which he has given you to do, may you be a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.

AMEN.

NOTE.

The proposal referred to is contained in the following Resolutions of the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE of the AMERICAN TEMPERANCE SOCIETY, passed Sept. 13, 1830; to wit;

“Whereas the Rev. Nathaniel Hewit, D. D. General Agent of the American Temperance Society, has been invited by a very respectable Church and Society in Bridgeport, Conn. to settle with them in the ministry; and as in these circumstances it is suitable that the Executive Committee should express to him their views respecting his continuance in the important work in which he is now engaged; therefore,

Resolved, that, in the judgment of this Committee, the labors of the Rev. Dr. Hewit have been eminently successful in promoting the Temperance Reformation in this country, and that it is highly important that his engagement in the service of the Society be renewed, should he find himself at liberty to decline his present call to return to the pastoral office.

Resolved, that, in case the Rev. Dr. Hewit should determine in favor of settling in the ministry, this Committee deem it very important to the cause of Temperance, that he should, with the consent of his Church, reserve to himself the right of engaging, at least three months in a year, in an agency for the American Temperance Society.”

Princeton Theological Seminary

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